

But the good news is that: Members of this House from both sides of aisle with conservative to moderate to liberal leanings—are finally beginning to band together to try and reverse the trend to shut down the only specialists we have in this country who are trained to provide care for our sickest and most vulnerable population—senior citizens and others who are disabled and homebound.

I take great pride in having introduced H.R. 4339 last week—a bill calling for a three-year moratorium on the so-called temporary payment (interim) system that has caused home health agencies to fail and patients to be left totally without resources to keep them safe.

The Interim Payment system (IPS) was only supposed to remain in place until HCFA could get the Prospective Payment System in place in October of 1999. The horror is that HCFA has advised Congress that due to circumstances, including HCFA's problem with Y2K considerations—it can't meet the deadline next October.

If HCFA doesn't meet that deadline, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter—the BBA says that when next October 1st rolls around it will automatically trigger a 15 percent reduction in all reimbursements to home health agencies.

I deeply appreciate the bipartisan support my bill, H.R. 4339 has received over the past week, and I encourage those Members who haven't cosponsored it, to do so.

But because of a need to provide a solution to the IPS problem while at the same time guaranteeing budget neutrality—we need not only a moratorium—but also a trigger of our own—a trigger that works on behalf of home health agencies—instead of the built-in trigger that gets pulled next October making matters much worse than they are today.

That is why we have introduced the HERO bill today—the Homebound Elderly Relief Opportunity bill—to provide both a moratorium for immediate relief—and a trigger mechanism for future relief and stability among both agencies and the patients they serve.

This is a bipartisan effort to get something done—something positive and constructive to get home health agencies back on their feet—where they deserved to be—and Medicare patients back into home care programs they rely upon for daily comfort, for physical and mental stability, for the chance to remain at home among loved ones while struggling with the infirmities of old age and disease.

That what this joint effort is about today—my colleague Representative VAN HILLEARY of Tennessee and I—it is our rallying cry for action before this Congress adjourns to help those we are sworn to help—vulnerable people who cannot help themselves—the sickest and most frail population in this country—who depend upon home care and the people who deliver it to them.

We need to do the right thing. I strongly believe the combined moratorium to provide immediate relief, and the trigger mechanism in the HERO bill for future cost effectiveness, is the right thing to do.

LEGISLATION TO RAISE THE MANDATORY RETIREMENT AGE FOR U.S. CAPITOL POLICE OFFICERS FROM 57 TO 60

HON. JAMES A. TRAFICANT, JR.

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to change the mandatory retirement age for U.S. Capitol Police Officers from 57 to 60. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

As every Member of Congress know, the Capitol Police is one of the most professional and dedicated law enforcement agencies in the country. They perform a vital and important function. The force is blessed to have a large number of experienced and highly competent officers. Unfortunately, every year dozens of officers are forced to leave the force because of the mandatory retirement rule. Many of these officers are in excellent physical condition. More important, they possess a wealth of experience and savvy that is difficult, if not, impossible to replace.

Raising the mandatory retirement age from 57 to 60 will provide the Capitol Police with the flexibility to retain experienced, highly competent and dedicated officers. It will enhance and improve security by ensuring that the force experiences a slower rate of turnover. Please keep in mind that should this legislation become law, Capitol Police officers between the ages of 57 and 60 would still have to meet the standard requirements to remain on the force, including proficiency on the shooting range.

This legislation is a common sense measure that will go a long way in improving and enhancing what is already one of the finest law enforcement agencies in the world. Once again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, August 3, 1998, I was en route back to Washington with family members and missed three roll call votes.

Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on H.R. 3743 (Roll Call vote 377); I would have voted "aye" on S. J. Res. 54 (Roll Call Vote 388), and I would have voted "aye" on the Shays/Meehan Campaign Finance Reform Substitute, as Amended (Roll Call Vote 379).

SUCCESS OF CARE

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, as Congress moves forward on consideration of fiscal year 1999 foreign operations appropriations, it is worth noting a few of the many successes

CARE, one of the world's largest international relief and development organizations, has had in helping the world's poor. Many of CARE's programs are supported by private donations and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Day-long walks for water forced families in Mozambique to set priorities for water use. Drinking and cooking ranked ahead of washing hands and taking baths. CARE worked with communities to identify health problems related to water and sanitation needs. As a result CARE's Community Water and Sanitation Project was designed to dig wells and install water pumps close to where people lived. Now mothers and children can walk to the nearest pump in minutes and health has improved because of the availability of clean water.

Six years ago, the region had 138 functioning water stations with more than 1,800 people using each. Five years later, the region had 372 water stations, each serving approximately 840 people. As of November 1997, 97 percent of the pumps installed were functioning satisfactorily.

In Ecuador, CARE's SUBIR Project is working with Chachi Indians living in and around the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve and the Yasuni National Park. For years, the country's timber companies have harvested lumber from these protected areas, stripping the land of all vegetation, leaving behind unusable, depleted soil and harming wildlife habitat. Further, the Chachi Indians have gained little or no income from the trees that populate their land. CARE's work is helping preserve the environment and increase the incomes of the indigenous people of the Reserve and National Park. They include working with the Government of Ecuador to obtain land titles to 35,000 hectares for the Chachi, teaching sustainable forest management and negotiating fair lumber prices with the timber companies.

The value organizations like CARE cannot be emphasized enough. Their efforts play an integral role in development assistance worldwide. These programs show how public-private partnerships between the U.S. Government, host country governments, private U.S. citizens and businesses can help others build a better future.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEPH LUBRANO

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 5, 1998

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Joseph Lubrano, the United States Postal Service (USPS) Brooklyn Postmaster. Joseph was promoted to the position of Brooklyn Postmaster in December of 1997 from his prior position of Officer-in-Charge, Brooklyn Post Office.

I wish to commend Joseph for his efforts in vastly improving the quality of postal service in the borough of Brooklyn. Joseph has expanded passport acceptance services in the Brooklyn post offices, encouraged station managers to meet and greet customers in their stations, and increased hours of operation in Brooklyn post offices and substations. His initiatives and responsiveness has improved customer relations between postal patrons and the USPS.